

# FORESIGHT<sup>2007</sup>



A Report from the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey

A State Project of New Jersey Lions



On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey (LEBNJ), I want to thank the Lions of New Jersey for their support during the

past 17 months, while we reorganized as a subsidiary of Midwest Eye-Banks. As trustees, we have done everything required to maintain our eye bank's mission as a New Jersey Lions project, offering the gift of sight to all who need our services, regardless of ability to pay. All of us on the Board are proud to be part of Midwest Eye-Banks and partners with the Sharing Network in promoting eye safety, educating the public about organ and tissue donation, and supporting research into the causes of blindness. Today, LEBNJ is in a position to thrive and grow in its capacity to serve others with your continued support.

The Staten Island Central Lions helped to establish the world's first eye bank in 1944.

Today, there are 60 Lions Eye Banks in the world because Lions understand that eye banking is a vital part of their promise to Helen Keller. To those Lions who have never contributed financially, have never taken an eye bank tour or have never registered as eye donors: I appeal to you to get behind our efforts to eliminate preventable blindness. To those clubs and individual Lions who have been so generous in the past, please continue to help us as much as you can. We need your help in educating the public about eye, organ and tissue donation, promoting eye safety, funding research, and ensuring that anyone who needs a cornea transplant can have one. Contact any of the trustees, or the LEBNJ office, to learn more about your Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey.

Yours in Lionism,

*Ken Mattfield, PDG*  
Chairperson, LEBNJ Board of Trustees

## The Past, Present and Future of Corneal Transplantation

*William H. Constad, M.D., Corneal Surgeon  
Medical Director, Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey*

A lot has changed in the arena of corneal transplantation since the first successful transplant was done by Dr. Eduard Zirm in 1905. In the succeeding 30 years, cornea transplants were rare, and used only tissue from living donors. In those days, the cornea was removed from the donor, who was often in the same operating room as the person receiving the donated tissue. The operations were performed only when a donor happened to be available, meaning they could occur at night, on holidays, virtually anytime.

With the advent of antibiotics in the 1930s and steroids in the 1940s, along with improved surgical instrumentation, post-surgical prognoses improved and the numbers of surgeries slowly increased. Early corneal grafts were square, as there was no way to cut a round piece of tissue evenly. Fine suture material was non-existent. The earliest sutures were placed over the transplant, not through it – like tying a suitcase on top of your car roof. Patients stayed in the hospital for two weeks with sandbags on either side of their heads to minimize movement.

*(continued on page 3)*





Dear Lions  
Community Partners,

I am delighted to join the  
Lions Eye Bank of New  
Jersey (LEBNJ) and to be  
a part of the wonderful

work to restore sight to the visually  
impaired, to support research to uncover  
the causes of eye disease and to educate  
our community about the importance of  
eye, organ, and tissue donation.

LEBNJ has a distinguished record of  
providing corneas for transplantation  
since it was established in 1970. With my  
background in hospital administration  
and experience serving on two non-profit  
boards in Philadelphia, I see LEBNJ poised  
for growth and service of the highest quality.  
In my most recent position, I worked at  
St. Christopher's Hospital for Children  
in Philadelphia in various positions  
for 13 years. Most recently, I was the  
administrative director for Professional  
Services, having oversight for the hospital's  
outpatient service departments. I bring  
my expertise in operations management  
and program development along with  
experiences with community involvement  
to LEBNJ to strengthen the organization,  
and to reach out to Lions and the medical  
community in our service area.

Since 1993, LEBNJ has been a State  
Project of the New Jersey Lions. Your  
tremendous support through the years has  
been invaluable in allowing us to continue  
to fulfill our mission. In 2006, we provided  
services in 14 of the 21 counties in New  
Jersey. LEBNJ provided 325 corneas for  
transplant in calendar year 2006. Other  
tissue not suitable for transplantation was  
used for research and training purposes.

What a privilege to be part of an organization  
that helped to give the gift of sight to more  
than 300 people!

And now, 2007 is off to a great start. Our  
goals for this year are to reach out and build  
partnerships with our local and medical  
communities. Our focus on quality and  
continuous improvement continues to be  
a top priority. In partnership with you, our  
future is very bright.

So, how can you help? One of our goals,  
called Challenge 500, is to increase the  
number of registered organ, tissue and eye  
donors in New Jersey before the end of the  
year. Our goal is 500 additional names.  
Here is how you can help and make a  
difference in the lives of others:

- Call us at (800) 653-9379 to request New Jersey Organ and Tissue Donor Registry materials for yourself, your friends, your family and your fellow Lions Club members. Ask everyone to complete and return the donor registration.
- If you are renewing your driver's license or getting your license for the first time, be sure to tell the agent at your local MVC that you wish to have the organ donor designation on your license.

If you would like to learn more about Lions  
Eye Bank of New Jersey and our role in the  
restoration of sight, the donor registry, and  
Challenge 500, or if you are interested in  
touring our eye bank, please call to schedule  
a program for your club. I look forward to  
working with you in this most worthwhile  
endeavor, and hope to hear from you.

*Margaret G. Chaplin*  
Executive Director

## Cornea Recipient Shares His Gratitude with the Lions of New Jersey

Louis D. Moccia of Clifton was offered  
a second chance for sight on July 26,  
2006 at Newark University Hospital.  
Until he received his cornea transplant,  
he didn't know about Lions Eye Banks.  
In a letter to our Eye Bank, he sent his  
"most sincere thanks" to the Lions  
organization. "What you do is just so  
tremendous," he added.

In a letter to the donor family, Moccia  
expressed his gratitude: "... because your  
loved one chose to make a gift of such  
overwhelming kindness to help others,  
I will once again enjoy the gift of sight...  
All too often, we take things for granted  
as we go about everyday living and it is  
not until we lose something that we  
realize just how blessed we are to have  
had it in the first place. My eyesight was  
always a matter of concern for me simply  
because of a congenital condition that  
rendered my left eye to be considered  
medically/technically blind. My right eye  
was my 'good' eye. To have the situation  
develop affecting the vision in my right eye  
was life-shattering to me. I could no  
longer work, drive, do simple things for  
myself. My wife became my eyes. The  
corneal transplant has changed my outlook  
for the future – it has lifted me from the  
depths of depression and uselessness and  
I know that each day will bring me closer to  
being independent once again."



## Engaging the Communities We Serve Through Education and Advocacy

Community education is an important aspect of our work. Together with the Lions on our Board of Directors and our volunteer Ambassadors, our Eye Bank has developed a partnership with the Sharing Network, and collaboration with the New Jersey Coalition on Donation to promote eye, organ, and tissue availability in New Jersey. Here are just a few of our achievements from 2006:

- Joined Donate Life America, a national collaboration of organizations committed to increasing eye, organ, and tissue donations in the United States.
- Celebrated the legacy of the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey by awarding Visionary of the Year honors to the founding leaders of the Eye Bank: Alfonse Cinotti, M.D., founding Medical Director, Silvio Venturi, original President of the Board of Directors, and Marshall Klein, original Executive Director.
- Reached out to the public at health fairs and community events.
- Established an Ambassador program, consisting of donor family members and

- cornea recipients who wish to help promote our mission in the community. Eileen Specchio, RN, Ph.D., one of our first Ambassadors, was the guest speaker at the annual Lions Eye Bank Week Open House in December.
- Covered the Lions Eye Bank Week Open House in the Lion magazine.
- Represented the Eye Bank at the USA/Canada Lions Forum in Columbus, Ohio, in September.
- Promoted the National Donor Sabbath Weekend with the Plainfield Lions Club.
- Initiated Challenge 500 – an initiative to get 500 people to commit to the New Jersey Donor Registry.



## The Past, Present and Future of Corneal Transplantation



*(continued from page 1)*

Today, corneal tissue is stored in special tissue culture media, which enables us to schedule surgical procedures well in

advance of the surgery. An instrument called a trephine allows us to cut a precise circle of the desired size to match the need. Modern sutures are much thinner than a human hair, and allow us to more precisely and securely place the donor tissue so that the patient can go home shortly after leaving the operating room. Normal activities are resumed much more quickly than in the past.

In 2005, with 88 U.S. eye banks reporting, there were a total of 48,474 surgical procedures done using corneal tissue.

Interestingly, in 2001, there were 51,305 procedures done. What we have noted over the past 10 years is a slow decline in the number of cornea transplants in the United States. We have seen a drop from 36,037 in 1990 to 31,952 in 2005.

What are the reasons for the decline? There are likely many factors. In part, we do better intraocular surgery, meaning there are fewer complications that may ultimately lead to the need for cornea transplants. Tissue culture media have improved, keeping the donor tissue healthier and allowing it to survive longer. Pharmaceutical agents used in the post-operative period decrease inflammation more quickly, giving the donor tissue a better chance for success. Surgical techniques are always being refined and improved, thus leading to longer survival

rates of grafts and the need for fewer repeat surgeries. Immunity-modulating drugs help to control rejection reactions and help to keep the donated tissue functioning longer. What's on the horizon? There is a relatively new surgical technique for transplanting only the back layer, or endothelium, of the cornea. The endothelium is the monolayer of cells that is the back of the cornea. The endothelium is responsible for helping to keep the cornea clear. In some diseases, this layer either dies, or fails to function adequately for the cornea to remain clear. Techniques evolving currently enable us to transplant only the posterior part of the cornea. We have already had much success with this procedure, and will likely see a transition to more of this type of surgery over the coming years.

## Field Technician Extends the Eye Bank's Mission Far and Wide



At all hours of the day and night, in bad weather, and often with little rest, field technicians play an important role in enabling the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey to recover eye tissue for transplantation. They're able to respond to calls on very short notice, and supplement the capabilities of full-time staff.

Davis Wilson has been working nights and weekends for six years as an Eye Bank field technician. "It's a difficult job," he says, especially the interrupted sleep and long nights away from home. "I keep in mind that we're helping people."

A certified medical technologist by day, Wilson has worked in various capacities in the health field. His work as a field technician for the Eye Bank has taken him as far north as Newton Hospital in Newton Township and south to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Camden. He may travel as long as five hours to recover eye tissue. Fortunately, he lives in the center of the state – Roselle, in Union County. He was introduced to eye tissue recovery by a friend who thought he'd be good at it. Indeed, in a short time, he mastered the craft and has enjoyed the work – even if it can be a little grueling at times. Occasionally, he may go all night without sleep. He may also need to contend with the weather. This winter, in fact, he faced a snowstorm on his way to a recovery at Hunterdon Hospital. Fortunately, his mother lived nearby and he had a place to stay until the storm passed.

"You have to be dedicated to get out of bed in the middle of the night, especially when it's freezing," says Wilson.

As a representative of the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey, Wilson also realizes that he's an extension of the Lions community mission. "We're putting their name to good use," explains Wilson, "by making sure we use the highest quality procedures and standards." That community mission is also reflected in Wilson's dedication, as he plays a critical role in the restoration of sight.

LIONS EYE BANK OF NEW JERSEY

# VISIONARY OF THE YEAR 2\*0\*0\*7

HONOREE:

MARY ANN CLAYTON, M.D.  
Bergen County Medical Examiner

Honoring Those who Share  
Our Mission  
to Restore Sight

Monday, June 11, 2007

For More Information:  
Please contact Margaret Chaplin at  
the Lions Eye Bank of New Jersey

(973) 921-1222



 **LIONS EYE BANK  
OF NEW JERSEY**  
DEDICATED TO THE RESTORATION OF SIGHT  
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